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WORLD BANK CLEARS \$500 MN TO SUPPORT MSMEs IN INDIA

The multilateral development bank said it will support Indian government's efforts to revitalise the Covid-hit MSME sector

PROVIDING WORKING CAPITAL FOR SMALL BIZ

The \$500-million Raising and Accelerating Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Performance (RAMP) will provide better access to finance and working capital for MSMEs by strengthening the receivable financing markets. It will also scale up online dispute resolution mechanisms to address the problem of delayed payments, the World Bank said

'MSMEs ARE INDIAN ECONOMY'S BACKBONE'

■ "The MSME sector, a critical backbone of India's economy, has been hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic," said Junaid Ahmad, World Bank Country Director in India
■ He added that the RAMP programme will support MSMEs firms to return to pre-crisis production and employment levels

18.5 yrs

IS THE MATURITY OF THE WORLD BANK
LOAN WITH A 5.5-YR GRACE PERIOD

CENTRE BLINKS, 'ARBITRARY & IRRATIONAL' VAX POLICY NIXED

Differential pricing for states chucked; govt to procure for 18+ too; new policy from June 21

MANISH ANAND @ New Delhi

MAKING a sharp course correction after widespread criticism, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday announced that the Centre will take full responsibility for free vaccinations across all age groups. Private hospitals, however, can continue procuring 25% of the manufactured vaccines and levy a maximum of ₹150 extra as service charge for administering the jab.

The rollout of the policy roll-back will begin on June 21. Modi also announced the extension of the PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojna scheme till Deepavali, November 4, for 80 crore of the population to avail free foodgrains.

In his address to the nation, Modi sought to put the earlier policy in place since May 1 in context, saying the decision to ask states to procure doses for the 18+ was taken in line with their demand that they be given greater flexibility. "From June 21, Monday, the Centre will provide vaccines for all citizens above the age of 18 years free of cost. The Centre will procure 75% of the vaccines manufactured and give them free to the states. No state in the country will have to bear any cost."

Modi added that the Centre and the states will work out the modalities of the rollout in the next two weeks. He also entrusted the states with the task of ensuring that private hospitals charge only ₹150 as service charge for vaccinations.

The reverting to the pre-May 1 vaccination procurement policy came in the backdrop of a number of chief ministers ap-

BALLPARK FISCAL COST OF FREE VACCINES

Estimated total number of adults	94 cr
Total number of doses required @ two doses/person	188 cr
Doses administered as on 6 June	23.3 cr
Total additional doses required	164.7 cr
Cost of additional doses at average ₹150/dose	₹24,705 cr
75% cost to be borne by the Centre	₹18,528.75 cr

Total additional cost for the Centre
₹18,529 crore
Note: We have assumed ₹150 per dose as Centre's cost. This is excluding the logistics cost the Centre could incur

pealing the Centre to take full responsibility for the procurement besides the Supreme Court taking a hard look at the policy formulation.

Modi sought to project that the Centre is in full control of the situation to deal with the ongoing pandemic. Exuding confidence that India will be able to scale up vaccinations, Modi stated that seven vaccine candidates are at the trial stage, including three in advanced stages, while work is in progress for a nasal vaccine. He informed that trials of two vaccines are on at a fast pace for children amid the scientific community expressing concerns about them being vulnerable in the third wave.

SC'S SHARP POSERS & OBSERVATIONS

- Why don't you procure vaccines also for the states?
- Dual pricing and procurement policy prima facie discriminatory
- Why can't Centre pay from ₹35,000 crore budgetary allocation for procurement for the 18+?
- Universal vaccination, including for all 18+, is Centre's primary responsibility
- Submit files on how the policy was conceived, including file notings

PM blames it on states, Opposition faults govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Monday sought to point fingers at states that suggested decentralisation of the rollout, to deflect blame for framing the widely criticised Covid vaccination policy that came into effect on May 1.

"The Centre had been running the vaccination since January 16, and the people were following all the protocol to get the jabs. But some of the states began demanding decentralisation, while there were questions about the age groups and the priority categories. Varied kinds of pressure tactics were employed, including questions about initial vaccinations of senior citizens," he said. A similar line of argument earlier came from NITI Aayog member V K Paul, who had squarely

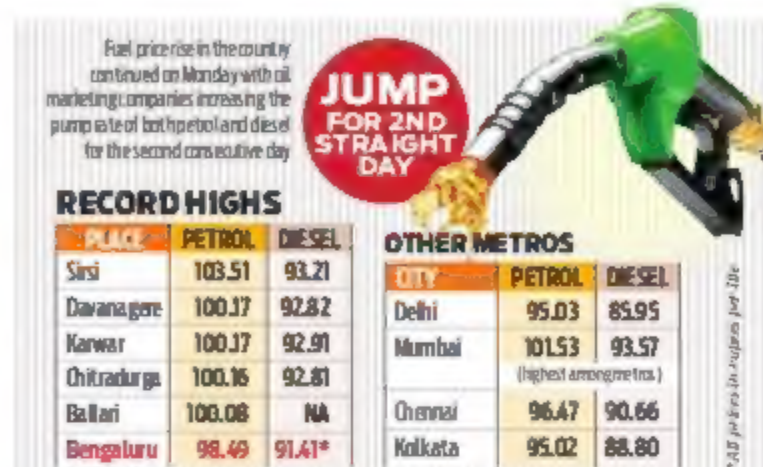
blamed the states for messing up the campaign.

But CPI (M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury criticised the PM's reasoning. "The Centre and the BJP must learn to accept responsibility for its failures when people of this country have paid with their lives. This incessant focus on spin and PR is an assault on and insult to the millions who perished in the pandemic," he said. Yechury attributed the latest policy shift to pressure from the Supreme Court's observations.

Opposition ruled states broadly welcomed the PM's decision. Tamil Nadu CM M K Stalin said "as the Prime Minister stressed multiple times that health is a state subject, it will be appropriate for each state to be given complete control over registration, validation and administration procedures."

Centralised procurement will further accelerate vaccination and provision of free foodgrains to 80 crore people will ensure food security for the poor

BS Yediyurappa, Chief Minister



Petrol 100 not out, diesel crosses 90

TEAM TNIE

PETROL prices in several districts in Karnataka breached the sensitive ₹100 per litre mark on Monday after touching a record high in several states including Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. At Sirsi in Uttara Kannada district, fuel prices were perhaps the highest in the state with petrol at ₹103.51 and diesel at ₹93.21 per litre.

In Bengaluru, fuel prices rose by 29 paise, but remained below the ₹100 mark, at ₹98.49 for petrol and ₹91.41 per litre of diesel. Balaji Rao, president of Bengaluru Petroleum Dealers' Association told TNIE that in another 10 days, the price will cross ₹100 per litre in Bengaluru too.

He explained that there are multiple reasons for the fuel hike including the lockdown, the rise in dollar price and also the dip in the economy, in which fuel sales is a large contributor. Earlier, India purchased some of the fuel from Iran in rupees. Now, with the Iran issue, the cost has escalated and also because India is buying in dollars from other OPEC countries, he said.

"Since there is a lockdown and movement is less, the rising fuel cost has had little impact so far. It will hit hard when the lockdown is lifted and movement to offices becomes regular. The rise in cost of other items along with fuel cost will have a major impact on the monthly home budgets," said Pradeep K, a factory manager, who is working from home in Bengaluru. For those in the districts, who are already badly hit by the pandemic and the lockdown, the spiralling fuel price is burning a deep hole in their pockets. Though their physical movement outside is restricted, the petrol and diesel prices will have a cascading effect on the prices of essential commodities.

CONTINUED ON: P5

Hold Class 12 practicals in online mode, says CBSE

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Monday asked all schools affiliated with it to complete internal assessments by June-end and conduct practical examinations for Class 12 students online.

The directive comes a week after the Centre, following a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, decided to cancel the board examination this year in view of the pandemic.

Nearly 12 lakh students had registered for the examinations, traditionally held in the month of March every year.

The government has said students will be evaluated instead through a "well-defined" and "time-bound" criteria for an assessment plan, which is now being drafted and will include internal assessment among others. CBSE sources said many schools had approached it saying carrying out internal assessments was proving to be difficult as conducting practicals was a problem due to the Covid situation.

"Schools with pending internal assessment and practicals should complete them through online mode and submit to the board by 28 June," read the CBSE circular. The earlier deadline for uploading marks was June 11. The latest order gives schools extension for conducting practical work while underlining that no further extension will be given. Schools have also been asked to strictly adhere to Covid protocols while conducting the assessments.

BBMP: 30L people to be vaccinated in 30 days

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE State Government has set a target of vaccinating 30 lakh people in 30 days in Bengaluru. Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Chief Commissioner Gaurav Gupta said they will vaccinate people on a war footing to prevent the third wave.

According to BBMP data, in the last five months, 34,68,463 doses have been administered in the city. Of them, 28,54,671 people have been administered the first dose and 6,13,792 the second dose. In the last one week, 4,15,282 vaccines have been administered in private hospitals and 1,67,161 in government hospitals.

Also, of the 25 lakh people above 45 years, 15.43 lakh (60

KARNATAKA	JUNE 6	JUNE 7
Fresh cases	12,209	11,958
Recoveries	25,659	27,299
Deaths	320	340

per cent) have taken the first dose. Also of the 64 lakh people in the above 18 years age group, nine lakh (13 per cent) have taken the first dose.

Gupta said, "It is a collective target, comprising government and private centres and NGOs. To reach the target, the voters list is being used to identify those who have not taken the shot and those who have taken their first dose. A door-to-door survey will also be conducted, and citizens will get a call from 1912 for information on the second dose."

CONTINUED ON: P4

NATIONWIDE	JUNE 6	JUNE 7
Fresh cases	1,14,460	1,00,636
Recoveries	1,89,232	1,74,399
Deaths	2,677	2,427

JAB-O-METER	June 6	June 7
TAKE YOUR SHOT	33,53,539 doses	31,04,989 doses
TOTAL DOSES	23,59,39,165	



18 DEAD IN PUNE CHEM FACTORY FIRE
Fire bellows out of a unit at SVS Aqua Technologies at Ghotwade Phata in Pune on Monday | PTI / PIB

Most of those killed are women workers

At least 18 workers, mostly women, were charred to death in a devastating fire that broke out at a chemical firm in an industrial area in Pune district on Monday afternoon, officials said. One other worker suffered burn injuries

Firm manufactures chlorine dioxide

According to the officials, the fire broke out at SVS Aqua Technologies, which manufactures chlorine dioxide, and is located at Urwade in the Pirangut MIDC area of Mulshi tehsil on the outskirts of Pune city

Maharashtra, Central govts announce ₹7L aid

Maharashtra deputy CM Ajit Pawar announced an ex-gratia of ₹5 lakh to the families of those who died while Prime Minister Narendra Modi also announced ₹2 lakh each ex-gratia for the next of kin of the deceased

BSY says no to signature campaign in his support

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

A day after he said he would resign from the Chief Minister's post if the BJP central leadership asked him to, BS Yediyurappa shot down a supposed signature campaign in support of him, and told his party MLAs to stop politicking and to work towards fighting the pandemic.

The trigger was a statement by chief minister's political secretary MP Renukacharya that he had collected the signatures of 65 party MLAs to support Yediyurappa's continuation as CM.

Many senior leaders of the party slammed Renukacharya, saying such campaigns would look like the party is facing factionalism. Also, many MLAs, whose signature was on the letter, denied that they had signed any such document.

Renukacharya, who was at the Chief Minister's residence on Monday morning, said, "I have the signatures of 64-65 MLAs. There is nothing to hide. A copy of the letter in Kannada will be sent to the state unit of the party, while

the English version will go to party National President JP Nadda, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah."

Union minister Pralhad Joshi, RDPR minister KS Eshwarappa and others denied that there was such a signature campaign.

"There is no campaign 'for' or 'against' Yediyurappa. Such acts have no value in BJP. Who is Renukacharya to collect signatures? Decisions in the party are taken by the central leadership and we all are loyal to the party," he said.

Most scathing was Dharwad West MLA Arvind Bellad, whose name has been doing the rounds as probable CM candidate.

He said, "The last time signatures were collected was when MLAs hadn't received funds from Eshwarappa's RDPR ministry. Some 64-65 MLAs had signed, but the matter was written on one page and signatures were collected on another. I hope those signatures are not being misused. We will get clarity in the legislature party meeting."

CONTINUED ON: P3

EXPRESS READ

Former minister Mumtaz Ali Khan passes away

Bengaluru: Former minister Prof Mumtaz Ali Khan passed away on Monday at his residence, due to age-related ailments. He was 94 and is survived by his wife and a daughter. Khan was Minister for Minority Affairs, Haj and Wakf in the BJP government in 2008.

House regularisation: Last date extended

Bengaluru: The Karnataka Government has extended the last date for receiving applications to regularize houses that were constructed on government lands in urban and rural areas prior to January 1, 2015. P3

UNLOCK BENGALURU

The State Government and officials are working to ensure that 'Unlock-2' of the city delays the onset of the Third Wave. Apart from forming guidelines scientifically, officials, experts and members of the Technical Advisory Committee are studying the models of other states and even countries.

Sindhuri hints at a larger plot behind her removal

K SHIVA KUMAR @ Mysuru

ROHINI Sindhuri, former Mysuru deputy commissioner who was shunted out on Saturday after a spat with Mysuru City Corporation Commissioner Shilpa Nag, hinted that there is more to her transfer than meets the eye.

On Monday, talking to The New Indian Express, she in a way alleged that the land mafia was behind her transfer. She said, "People are witness to eve-

rything. Such things happen everywhere and it is quite common. Officers cannot speak about all the incidents that happen. My aim was to protect government land and water bodies."

Sindhuri, who has been posted as commissioner for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, said, "We took up the initiative to clear encroachments around Ayyajanhundi and Keergalli Lakes. There were some issues

with the survey number at Kurubarahalli which went up to the Supreme Court. We defended the case well." Mysuru-Kodagu MP Pratap Sinha said, "Rohini Sindhuri had eight long months to weed out land mafia and act against it. It's not right for her to comment on it now."

On her spat with Shilpa, who too has been transferred out of Mysuru, Sindhuri said she felt pity for her. "Her outburst

showed desperation and insecurity. One cannot feel their mission is accomplished if an officer gets transferred. The focus should have been on fighting the pandemic," she added.

"My focus was to improve tourism in the city, but it did not happen because of Covid," she said. An RTI activist M Gangaraju too said he had demanded the DC to hasten the probe into his complaints about land irregularities involving politicians in Mysuru.